



It's Christmas Time Again

There's a fire in the grate and a light in the hall,
For it's Christmas time again,
And the sleighbells ring and the children call,
For it's Christmas time again.
It's time for a Christian land to raise
Her loudest paeans of love and praise
For the Holy Babe of the Bethlehem days,
For it's Christmas time again.

There's a wreath of green at the windowpane,
For it's Christmas time again,
And the church bells echo the glad refrain,
For it's Christmas time again.
Oh, it's time to turn with the golden smile
To the friend we doubted and scorned awhile,
To rid our hearts of their greed and guile!
For it's Christmas time again.

—Lalia Mitchell in
Ladies' Home Journal.

Passing Christmas Eve Outdoors

WE all slept under the stars, as usual, on Christmas eve. To shut oneself up in a room from the delicious South African night is simply to miss one of the joys of living. "No one knows the stars who has not slept, as the French happily put it, a la belle étoile. He may know all their names and distances and magnitudes and yet be ignorant of what alone concerns mankind—their serene and gladsome influence on the mind." Stevenson surely would have loved Rhodesia for its nights alone.

One great advantage of the long drought from which we had been suffering—in Rhodesia one must needs be an optimist or die—is that there were practically no mosquitoes and very few flies, so that the stuffiness of a mosquito curtain was unnecessary.

The night was cool and silent, except for the distant howl of a jackal and the occasional hoot of an owl. About five o'clock the life of day began to stir, and the sun gradually turned the mopani and mimosa trees to a golden green and bathed us in the scent of mimosa blossom, the go-away bird called impudently from a bush close by, and two green parakeets flew over our heads.

Then one little sleeper after another rubbed his eyes and crept to the foot of the bed to fathom the treasures of the Christmas stocking. As the sun rose higher tongues were loosened, and soon crackers cracked, and trumpets, six of them, were heralding the morn, if not exactly in the manner of the angels.

The noise worried no one. But when we had had enough we dispersed to seek baths, and some of us were even energetic enough to have a round of golf before breakfast.—"The Heart of the Veld," by Madeleine Alston.

Hang Up a Jar Instead of A Stocking

NO LITTLE Mexican boy or girl ever thinks of hanging up a stocking. They have something far more interesting. Three or four days before Christmas stands spring up about the alameda, or open park, without which no Mexican village is complete. All about these shops are hung the pinatas, which take the place of Christmas stockings. These are apparently great dolls 2 or 3 feet tall, dressed in tissue paper, with paper mache faces and dangling legs and arms. In reality their flowing paper garments conceal earthen jars for the holding of candies.

Sometimes the pinatas are in the form of angels or fairies, but usually they represent some person prominent in Mexico. President and Mrs. Diaz used to smile from every stand. The Mexican child may live in a hut built of flat stones piled together in a public lot, but he has his pinata at Christmas time.

In the better homes the pinatas are strung on a rope across a room. They are already heavy with their load of dulces, or candies, and they dangle somewhat dangerously over the heads of the beholders. Finally, the tallest man is blindfolded, given a stout cane and turned round and round. Leaping up, he strikes at the suspended figures. Amid shrieks of laughter and directions he keeps striking until he hits one of the jars. "Crack!" go its sides, and, being made only of baked clay, they crumble away and the sweets come pouring out. Nobody is too dignified to scramble for them. The older people are on their knees with the children. Everybody gets at least a mouthful. Then another is blindfolded, turned about and told to strike for another sugary deluge.—L. Crozier in McCall's Magazine.

Timorous Lover.

A woman went into a store for a pair of slippers. She asked the shop assistant to get her a pair about size 10, and she wanted them squeaky.

"They are for my father," she added. "Squeaky, miss? I'm afraid we have not got any of that kind."

"Couldn't you make him a pair of squeaky ones?" asked the young woman. "There is a young man who visits me frequently, and it would be very convenient for him to know just when he is coming downstairs."

Saving Food.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes"—so said the poet.

"Well?"

"What did the poet mean by that?"

"An early example of food conservation."

The Practical Girl.

He—You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

She—That sounds all right, but I don't know how much the compliment is worth until you tell me how many pretty girls you have seen.

"BOXING DAY"

AMERICANS go back to the "grind" on the day after Christmas, smoking the cigars that the wife chose because of the "pretty hands," but the Englishman observes boxing day that day. The name would lead one to suppose something in the nature of a fist encounter, but the supposition is wide of the mark. The "boxing" means simply boxes—the neat little packages presented to the housemaid, the cook, the postman, the policeman, the railway conductor, the dustman. The boxes are now generally quite round, about the size of a fifty cent piece in the great number of cases, and are as much silver as the government thinks best to put into a two shilling piece or a half crown.

CHRISTMAS REUNIONS

HOW many families whose members have been dispersed and scattered far and wide in the restless struggles of life are on this day reunited and meet once again in that happy state of companionship and mutual good will which is a source of such pure and unalloyed delight and one so incompatible with the cares and sorrows of the world that the religious belief of the most civilized nations and the rude traditions of the roughest savages alike number it among the first joys of a future condition of existence provided for the blest and happy! How many old recollections and how many dormant sympathies does Christmas time awaken!—Charles Dickens.

Reviving Old Time Yule Customs

SPECIAL efforts are being made by women in many communities to spread a revival of the old customs regarding Christmas. Some years ago a Boston woman with a touch of antiquarian spirit managed to stimulate Boston to revive a pretty Yuletide custom by celebrating its coming by singing carols in the streets and by illuminating the houses through the placing of candles in the windows. Other cities emulated Boston in this matter. In Carlisle, Pa., a community Christmas tree was lighted in the public square, and its glowing joy was continued all along the streets by lighted candles placed in the windows, many of which showed in the middle of the rooms so lighted up, displayed to the passerby in the night, private Christmas trees, the glitter and beauty of which thus were shared with all.

An objection to this attempt at gladness—at least so far as concerns the use of candles—has been the risk of fire. But these days of electricity or even of gas seem to minimize the idea of danger, and there are different devices that may be applied to do away with all risk in the carrying out of the friendly suggestion. It is advised therefore that "the gladness and brightness of the home on Christmas eve be not kept behind closed blinds," and to that end it is suggested that the light from every window, whatever its nature, be permitted to shine into the streets until midnight. The idea of light is associated with all that is good in life. The glow of the crackling Yule log betokened the hospitality ready to greet the stranger at that time, but there was more to it than that. Light in days gone by was supposed to keep off evil spirits.—Sallie Wistar in Philadelphia Public Ledger.

The Christmas Bird

ROASTED swan was the Christmas piece de resistance in Chaucer's day, but this dish gave place to the peacock, and the peacock in its turn was conquered by the turkey, when Capt. John Smith, fresh from his Virginian wars, came home to tell the amazed English folk of the bird that he saw parading the new world forests, "exactly like a proud Turk showing off before his harem."

When the peacock was in its glory at Christmas its plumage was generally restored to the roasted bird and its beak gilded. Sometimes the whole bird was covered with gold leaf and a strip of cotton, saturated with spirit, set alight in its beak—a relic possibly, with the English snapdragon and blazing pudding, of the fire worship of pagan days. A lady of noble birth and great beauty was always chosen to bear the bird into the banquet hall. In the days of tournaments it was over the peacock that the knights, with uplifted swords, swore their oaths of chivalry and valor. The last record of such fare seems to have been not upon a Christmas, but at the banquet given by the duke of Granada to the duke of Clarence, afterward William IV of England.

It must be admitted that golden peacocks and boars' heads have most alluring sounds to one with a jaded appetite, and the England of old, with its roistering carol singers, seems a most attractive land to have lived in. But the Englishman of today is more than well content to have his carols sung by a little cockney lad, to laugh at the pantomimes in his magnificent comfortable theaters and to feast at home on turkey, mince pie and the blazing pudding.



A CHRISTMAS LULLABY BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT

Half an hour before midnight on Christmas eve in Mexico the "Library of the God Child" is sung. It is after this that the world-famous lullaby song of all Mexico, the "Roro," is heard. Every Mexican mother knows this "Rock-a-bye" song, which is supposed for the soothing of the infant Jesus. In time and tune it is not unlike the American song, "Old Gray Goose."

Many other nations besides the Mexicans have their Christmas songs, but not many have distinctive Yuletide lullabies.

"A fountain pen," answered an enthusiastic young philosopher to the question, "What was your best Christmas gift?"

"I had a hundred-dollar watch given to me once," he added, "but even that isn't as necessary as a fountain pen. If you get the right kind you simply wouldn't be caught dead without it. It never leaks. It never clogs. It'll write a clear, steady line on any old paper. It'd be cheap at \$10, and it only cost \$2.50."

"What are you doing now?" I asked.

"Selling fountain pens," he said.—New York World.

The Mother's Christmas Gift

It never comes to Christmas but I think about the times
We used to save our pennies and our nickels and our dimes,
And we bunched them all together, even little baby brother
Put in something for the present that we always gave to mother.

We began to talk about it very early in December,
'Twas a very serious matter to us children, I remember,
And we bunched them all together, our suggestions to each other,
For by nothing cheap and tawdry could we show our love for mother.

Hers must be a gift of beauty, fit to symbolize her ways;
It must represent the sweetness and the love that marked her days.
It must be the best our money, all combined, had power to buy,
And be something that she longed for; nothing else would satisfy.

Then it mattered not the token, once the purchase had been made.
It was smuggled home and hidden and with other treasures laid,
And we placed our present proudly in her lap on Christmas day,
And we smothered her with kisses and we laughed her tears away.

It never comes to Christmas but I think about the times
We used to save our pennies and our nickels and our dimes,
And the only folks I envy are the sisters and the brothers
Who still have the precious privilege of buying for their mothers.

—American Boy.

Here's a Merry Christmas Game

THE old English game of tip requires the use of enough assorted Christmas candles, nuts, raisins and other dainties to make a small pile upon a table, also a pair of sugar tongs. One of the party is chosen, who must retire to another room, while the remaining players decide upon one of the dainties in the pile to be known as "tip." The chosen person is then recalled and with the tongs removes pieces from the pile, trying to avoid the piece named Tip, of which, however, he does not know the location. All pieces removed belong to him unless he moves "tip," when all must be returned to the pile and the turn passes to the next player, who retires to the other room while another "tip" is named. A player may pass his turn when, after drawing several pieces, he wants to avoid the possibility of losing them through drawing "tip." The game continues until the pile disappears.

